

4.4.74
8.4.76 ✓
28.3.77 ✓
2.4.79

Cantic Tebra (Hill) 23

Pueri Hebraeorum (LOIS-E-76)

Salvator Mundi

(Hills, RHR
LOIS-50)

(PREFACE of PASSION)

MCP 243

These two weeks of the Christian calendar, leading up to the celebration of Easter, put us face to face with one of the deepest mysteries of human life. Suffering is not a pleasant thing; it's not something people normally want to think about; it's something to avoid for ourselves, and prevent for others. Yet despite our human progress and the advance of science and medicine, it's still here and keeps coming back as a problem people search for answers to, the great question mark over life. Most of us perhaps don't want to think about it, until one way or another we encounter suffering in our own lives or in the lives of people we care deeply about — and faced with the actual experience, many people break up, cursing God or denying vehemently that He exists at all — because they cannot find any understanding. We try so hard to banish suffering and the thought of it — sometimes even in inhuman ways, which do have an emotional attraction for us, so afraid are we of having to suffer ourselves or see others suffer. But we can't follow the life of Christ, understand Him or love Him without coming up against His Passion, the suffering He endured and the death He died. And each year, in our Christmas lives with Him, it's Holy Week and Easter that draws us into the mystery of His suffering, and helps us to see a little more clearly (we pray) the meaning of it all, in His life and in our own. Knowing Him and loving Him, we get some insight into the place of what we do have to suffer, in our own lives and the life of the world around us; not perhaps a perfect understanding or acceptance of it, but a vision or indication that it's not an altogether negative or unintelligible thing.

And with Christ, because of His experience and where it led Him and has done for all of us, we can find strength to endure what cannot be avoided... Not only to endure merely, but to turn to something positive, in the power of His love. Instead of being something only destructive and hateful, suffering can become a source of power, a way to love and understanding of God, of our fellow-men and of our own relationship with them. You possibly know someone yourself who's been changed by suffering, become perhaps even more Christ-like. Such an understanding is possible for people who are not Christian at all; it's not possible for those who can't go out of themselves — which is, perhaps, why there seems to be a greater fear and abhorrence and refusal of suffering in the more affluent, comfortable and to a large extent self-centred modern societies. There is no simple human answer to the question ~~problem~~ of why you or I or any individual should have to suffer: there is no divine explanation either in the teaching of Christ — but in His passion and death, accepted in obedience to His Father and in love for us all and to bring us out of the slavery and fear of sin in the world, there is an answer: love can do this, and it's the way to a new life, the full life of the Risen Christ. "Was the Messiah not bound to suffer thus before entering upon His glory?" Not having sought it, He took it upon Himself, in solidarity with us and for our sake, so that we all could be reconciled with God in His return to His Father. It's only through Christ that we can come to the Father: we have to go with Him, or not go at all; we have to share His suffering and the suffering of the world. For us Christians, the question mark over life has become a personal invitation to drink His chalice with Him, for ourselves and for people whom He loves who don't know Him or the need they have of Him.

For a prayer in russia now today, here's [part of Francis Poulencé's setting of the medieval

LOIS-E-76

(Poulencé)

Teaching Father's
denominational notes

"Christus factus est pro vobis obediens" by Antonio

hymn, Stabat Mater: Let me bear Christ's death, let me share His suffering and remember
 his blows, let me be wounded with his blows, possessed by the cross, because of love for
 your Son.

MUSIC - PRAYERS

To what I was saying before, I should add
 this caution: there is, too, an unhealthy morbid desire for suffering which some people
 have - an enjoyment of suffering in itself, which is due to mental, emotional or other
 disturbances, to a lack of human development. And there is the philosophy, such as that of
 the stoics, which makes a virtue of endurance. These are not Christ's way, or the
 Christian way: it is not in endurance or in suffering itself that the great saints & mystics
 rejoiced and gloried, but in sharing with Christ in their own experience, His passion, for
 love of Him and of their fellowmen. They learned, as ~~every~~ ^{every true follower} of Christ must
 do, to transform what we have no choice but to undergo, into an act of love, of self-
 giving, of expiation and reconciliation, in sympathy with all the mystery of human
 suffering. 'God did not spare His own Son', whom He loves. There are people who seem
 special singled out, as it were, to suffer - it's not their fault, it seems so unfair:
 but they have (or can have) such a special closeness to our Lord who accepted the same
 way because it was His Father's love - God's love is to bring people close to Him & to
 each other. It's only by contemplation and prayer before the figure of Christ crucified that
 we will ever begin to understand God's love.

✓
 Poulenc: Stabat
 Aug 2'